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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe actual on-the-job behaviors of a sample of principals working in a large city school district. Specifically, the principals were asked how they define their role and how they use their authority to provide a stabilizing influence for the organization. The key organizational maintenance efforts of principals, revealed by the study, include maintaining disciplinary order in the school, keeping outside influences and staff conflicts under control, and keeping the school supplied with adequate resources. Among the discretionary mechanisms employed are event management, behavior and image control, community involvement, staff reward and punishment, and the principals' use of the system to their best advantage. An extensive review of the literature is included. (Author/LD)

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THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP:

AN ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY ROLE

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THE URBAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP:
AN ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY ROLE

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, Chester I. Barnard (1938) called our attention to organizational survival as a key element of executive behavior. Central to the organization is the specialized administrative activity that serves the function "of maintaining the organization in operation" (Barnard 1938, p. 215). Similarly, and more recently, James Q. Wilson (1973) has observed that the actions of persons fulfilling administrative roles are "principally, though not uniquely, determined by the requirements of organizational maintenance and enhancement" (p. 13). Organizational maintenance activity may be understood as behavior which oversees and protects the levels of contributed effort and resources upon which the organization depends.

A number of previous studies of school administration have suggested that the job of maintaining a high degree of stability in the school environment is central to the principalship role. Wolcott (1973, 1977), particularly, has drawn attention to the "variety-reducing" behavior of the principal and the emphasis placed upon keeping things "manageable" in the midst of pressures for change (Wolcott 1977, pp. 536-537). Sarason (1971) portrays a principalship role that is generally immersed in a "school culture" that places a premium upon matters of good order and efficient housekeeping; while Rogers (1968) suggests that the actions of principals to maintain order and the stability of their own environment occasionally work at cross-purposes with the policies of the larger organization (Rogers 1968, pp. 305-313).

Both Sarason and Wolcott stress that much of the pressure for maintaining control, managing conflict, and "keeping the lid on" comes from the central administration. Wolcott writes that typically, for the principal, "the exercise of the authority of his office [is] parcelled out to him policy by policy and directive by directive. His freedom [is] to make no serious mistakes" (Wolcott 1973, p. 306). In a more recent study, Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) similarly conclude that the mark of an effective principal from the central office perspective is to "keep things calm" and to see that the work of the school system proceeds smoothly.. They write: "Superintendents generally prefer that conflicts arising at the school level be managed by the principal" (Blumberg and Greenfield 1980, p. 21).

Despite an indication from past research that the school principalship includes an organizational survival role and that this role is tied to the expectations of hierarchical superiors, there has been little documentation of the actual system maintenance behaviors of principals "on-the-job." It may be suggested that the school principalship functions in an important boundary-spanning capacity for the educational organization, with a function of interpreting the organization to its clientele (and clientele to organization) that is as yet little understood.

There are many questions to be asked about the principal's organizational stability role. Just what do principals actually do to reduce variety, manage conflict, and "keep the lid on"? What powers are available, as well as what constraints are there, as principals interpret and implement school policy and procedure? Do the organizational stability activities of the building principal retard and reduce opportunities for change in school systems, or do they help facilitate and "smooth" organizational adoptation to change? Do some principals place much more stress upon stability and conflict management than others? Are some principals much less constrained than others by the organizational stability

role; that is, do they, as both Sarason (1971) and Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) suggest, engender change despite the constraints imposed by "the system"?

It is the intent of this paper to provide a beginning in a further understanding of the principal's organizational stability role. The paper seeks to provide a descriptive summary of the actual, on-the-job behaviors of a sample of principals working in a single large-city school district. The data are drawn from a multi-year, ethnographic study of principals in one of the nation's larger school systems. The research, underway for more than two years, has involved the intensive observation of some twenty-six city principals for some twelve working days apiece, spaced (in the case of each principal) over the course of one school year. The principals represent a variety of school settings and type (e.g., both elementary and high schools, large and small schools, inner-city and outer-city schools). The sample of principals is additionally representative of both male and female and minority/non-minority administrators.[1] It may be suggested that the use of ethnographic procedures, involving a team of observers and a variety of research subjects, offers a uniquely deep and rich insight into the daily life of the site-level administrator in public education.

FINDINGS

The urban school principal is education's most visible, "on-line" administrator. More than any other single individual in the American school hierarchy, the principal is the pivotal exchange point, the working broker between teachers and students on the one hand and the political establishment--superintendent, school board and taxpayer--on the other. Through the principal's office pass the problems and decisions that affect not only the general life of the institution but the hopes and aspirations of each individual living within it.

We know that the principal's job is tough, demanding, and filled with uncertain pressures from many different quarters. What we do not know very much

about is how the principal orchestrates the resources at his or her disposal to keep "the learning community" working toward its daily goals. Our findings from the research thus far indicate that principals do exercise discretion in the day-to-day delivery of the services of their schools.[2] It would appear additionally that strategies and devices for organizational stability and survival comprise an important portion of the discretionary activity of the principalship. Among the key organizational maintenance activities of principals are actions to: (1) Maintain disciplinary stability over the school, (2) keep "outside" influences under control, (3) keep staff conflicts at bay, and (4) keep the school supplied with adequate resources.

Maintaining Disciplinary Stability

A key responsibility of every principal is the supervision of school decorum and disciplinary order. Styles, of course, vary. Some principals give much personal effort to the strict control of pupil behavior, the cleanliness of the school, etc.; others are more willing to accept a bit of noise, confusion, and untidiness while nonetheless overseeing the maintenance of control.

Nearly every principal roams the halls of the school, stands awhile at points of heavy traffic in school corridors, tours the school's playground, and establishes his or her "presence" in the school at times of greatest student mobility (e.g., recess, before and after school, lunch, class passing periods). Principals frequently express some anxiety at these times: "This is the time of day I hate most, you never know what's going to happen during the lunch hour."

It is while pupils are on the move, when there's much confusion and decreased opportunity for careful supervision, that injury, theft, fighting, vandalism, and "rioting" are most likely to occur. Principal A (in an elementary school) spends an average of seventy-five minutes in his working day supervising the movement of pupils into and out of the school building, overseeing pupil behavior in the cafeteria and in the halls during the lunch hour, and "touring" the school

corridors during passing periods. Principal B (also in an elementary school) spends less time "policing" the school during the day but is careful to eat his lunch each noon with the students in the cafeteria and to exit the building with the pupils at afternoon dismissal--stopping fights, shooing pupils off the school grounds towards home (devoting an average of twenty-five minutes in his day). Principals C and D (both in high schools) spend an average of thirty minutes of their working day similarly supervising and regulating student behavior ("hats off please," "hurry or you'll be late to class," "where's your ID badge?") as pupils enter and leave the building, eat lunch, exchange classes, and group for special occurrences (e.g., an after-school dance). This activity is undertaken despite the existence of assistant principals for discipline, security aides, hall monitors (both students and faculty), and even one or more police officers in nearly every city high school.

In the course of maintaining order in the school, principals appear to concentrate much of their energy upon: (a) the anticipation of likely problems or occurrences, (b) the effective control of events and crises that do occur, and (c) the development and enforcement of school rules as guides to proper institutional behavior, including the establishment and maintenance of an appearance (image) for the school of orderliness and control.

Problem Anticipation

In an earlier report of our research (Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980), it was observed that principals tend to spend a good deal of time "on the go." A sub-sample of ten principals (high school and elementary combined) spent just a little more than half of their time (53%) in their private offices. A good part of each day is spent in motion--a tour of the halls, a monitoring of the cafeteria during the lunch period(s), a quick check upon and observation of activities underway (classroom learning, school assemblies, the library, physical education), throughout the building; checking items of information with the school

staff; making sure individuals (e.g., aides, hall monitors, playground supervisors, street crossing guards) are on duty; being generally available to both staff members and pupils who have questions or items of information, comments, and special problems.

It appears that much of the movement of the principal around the school and its environs is in the nature of a "search routine"--involving both the maintenance of a physical presence in the school and an attempt to anticipate and quell potential trouble. Elementary and high school principals alike will commonly position themselves near a main entrance at times of pupil entrance and exit and typically walk the halls and corridors of the school at various "passing periods." Frequently, at these moments a fight is stopped, a bit of excess noise is quelled, the disciplinary rules of the school are made manifest, potential accidents are spotted and averted. Elementary principal Wright, for example, strolled outside the school at day's end, noticed that the school crossing guards at a busy intersection had failed to appear, and guided pupils across the street herself for the next twenty minutes. High school principal Smith, while walking the first floor hall just after school, noticed that a glass-enclosed display case had cracked dangerously under the pressure of students crowding to read a new listing of class rankings. Smith had the students back away from the case and organized an orderly viewing of the information. High school principal Rawlins, spot-checking student ID's at an entrance to the school, noticed two non-students entering the building and escorted them back outside. The school has been plagued recently by "outsiders" disturbing classroom activities, and most teachers have begun locking their classroom doors while in session.

The search and problem anticipation routines of the principal also involve a careful attention to information retrieval. The principalship tends to be a lonely position, easily cut off from rumors, occurrences, alterations

in patterns of behavior, etc. which may be important to a knowledgeable administration of the school. Principals are sensitive to the desires of staff members to be free from administrative intrusion. Principals, for example, seldom frequent the faculty lounge and are generally circumspect in discussions with and in demands upon their faculty--for the most part leaving people alone, as professionals, to teach.

Nevertheless, the principal requires a good deal of information about the work of the school and must devise strategies for data acquisition. Elementary principal Jones stands nearly every day at the entrance to the student cafeteria serving line, during the lunch hour. Although monitoring pupil behavior at a time of confusion and opportunity for disruption, Jones comments that he's accomplishing something else as well. As he watches and interacts with the pupils entering the cafeteria, Jones remarks: "This is where I gather a lot of my information. Kids tell you things, let you know what's going on, give you leads. It's a valuable way to spend some time each day."

Similarly, principal Booth eats lunch daily with and among the pupils in the elementary school cafeteria. He mentions that there are two reasons for this, besides pupil supervision. First, by eating the school lunch with the children he's able to handle any parental complaints about the food by pointing out that he, personally, eats exactly the same meal each day. Second, by eating in the midst of the children, he establishes a line of communication. And, on a day of research observation some days later, a girl approaches Booth, as he and the researcher are talking, to tell him that one of the boys in her class received a bloody nose that morning, after being hit with a ruler by the teacher. Booth thanks the girl, asks her to keep it to herself, and asks her to keep him informed regarding any future occurrences. As we leave the cafeteria, Booth mentions that he's very much aware of a problematic situation regarding this teacher and is using the children to keep tabs on the teacher's behavior while he and the assistant principal determine what should be done. He's off now to

tell the assistant principal about the newest incident.

In other information processing behaviors, we find that most principals are careful to position themselves nearby as the school's faculty members sign-in each morning and sign-out each afternoon. Beyond the usual "good morning," "how are you," "did you have a nice weekend," etc, there is a frequent sharing of information about school procedures, upcoming events, rumors, events in other schools, personal concerns, etc. In addition, principals typically take a once or twice daily tour of the school while classes are in session--dropping very briefly into classrooms, visiting momentarily with the school janitorial staff, checking on pupils who appear in the halls, looking into the condition of a washroom or two, chatting with other staff members (e.g., aides, cafeteria workers, librarians) as they appear. A common observation by the principals is that this activity permits them to gauge the school climate. A halls tour of just a few minutes, with merely seconds listening to the sounds coming from each classroom, gives a quick reading of "what's going on," how well the school has "settled down to its business," what the "temper and mood of the student body seems to be today."

Time is also spent by the principal in overseeing as well as structuring particularly problematic or potentially dangerous events well before they occur. Principal Smith and his assistants spent the better part of one afternoon deciding how best to insure the security of their school and its students as plans were made for an upcoming dance. Some recent racial incidents at another, nearby high school had created a tense atmosphere in the community. Similarly, Principal Mathews phoned a fellow principal at a "next-door" school, and also phoned the local police precinct, to report a rumor that a couple of local gangs were planning to battle late that night at a nearby park. Mathews explained that these gang conflicts have an enormous effect upon the "atmosphere" among the younger children in his elementary school. Finally, Principal Strong talked on the phone to a fellow principal at another high school. The two principals agreed to "make a show" of goodwill and friendliness between their schools at the start of the

next day's basketball game. This was prompted by a rumor that the team members of the opposing school were "out to get" the players from Strong's school after a particularly rough and highly physical game earlier in the year.

Event Management

As Principal Jones was returning to his school from a few hours spent on school district business elsewhere in the city, he remarked: "This is always the time I dread; you never know what's happened, what's waiting on your desk when you return." Jones spoke for many principals in expressing a combination of fear and frustration over the unpredicatable nature of life in schools.

-A large rock came crashing through a second floor window on a seemingly quiet afternoon at the Belmont School, showering students with glass and sending the entire second floor into confusion and near-hysteria.

-Principal Warren received a telephone call near the end of the day from a teacher who had been leading a field trip to the city zoo. Two youngsters were lost; a search with police help had failed to locate the missing pair; it's necessary now for the bus to return home with the remaining children. What should the teacher do?

-A "festival" was held in the Beecher School on a warm day in late May. Firecrackers exploded, pandemonium reigned, food was thrown wildly, a number of teachers were "pushed around."

-Principal Crowley was informed by an aide that one of his teachers had suddenly gone "berserk." The teacher was screaming at her children in full voice, with tears streaming, and seemed to have gone completely to pieces.

In the midst of a constant threat of unforeseen events and potentially disruptive occurrences, principals commonly engage in some categories of behavior which seek to control and order the parameters of unintended activity. One strategy is to seek to keep the "fall out" from any unusual event to a minimum. When he learned that a large rock had been thrown through a second floor window, spraying a room with glass, the principal's initial response (after making sure there were no injuries) was not to send persons looking for those who threw the rock; instead, he sent staff members to the second floor to enter classrooms and explain the incident, herd pupils now in the halls back into classes, quiet

things down, enforce order. "They'll all be excited and keyed up on the second floor now, and that tension will build and build if we don't quiet everything down right away."

In another school, Principal Fenton and his assistant principal were discussing a problem surrounding a teacher newly assigned to their school a few weeks earlier. The teacher, a foreign born person, speaks English with a heavy accent. Parents in the school are complaining that their children are having trouble communicating with the new teacher and can't understand her heavily accented words of instruction. The parents are becoming increasingly exercised over the matter and are now threatening to take the issue to a meeting of the parents' advisory council at the level of the city's regional superintendency. Fenton, while aware of the parental pressure, did not become unduly concerned until hearing of the threat to bring the issue to "outside" attention. He remarks to the assistant that this upsets him; he doesn't want the school's linen washed in the public arena of a regional council meeting and they'd better take some steps to head it off. They decide to begin sitting in and observing the teacher's classroom rather closely "so we can tell the parents something is being done."

In yet another setting, Principal Gordon stresses upon his teachers the importance of not referring to yesterday's student outburst in the auditorium as a "riot." If we use the term [riot], then we've created it." The teachers are urged to drop all further discussion of the incident: "It's over; you can't run this thing into the ground. Shift your talk to the students who performed well all day long at the festival, not to the problems that lasted just a few seconds at the end," (Crowson and Porter-Gehrie 1980, p. 10).

A second strategy of event management is to be personally on-the-scene and to take charge in situations and endeavors which typically offer a potential for "getting out of hand." Sports contests, pep rallies, assemblies, passing periods, lunch, recess, before school and after school--are all points of time in the day when principals make an effort to see and be seen, to attend immediately and with authority to events and circumstances.

One activity that frequently called for the attention of principals during the months of our research was the transportation of pupils under the school district's voluntary pupil desegregation program. The buses connecting "home" and "receiving" schools were frequently off schedule or confused in routings. Each elementary principal kept a wary eye on the arrival and departure of the day's buses; and, invariably, there were occasions when pupils were stranded, worried parents were calling, the buses were reported broken down or "lost." Calls to the central office for bus scheduling usually failed to produce any helpful information, calls to the bus company similarly elicited: "Well, I think they're on the way." Often, well into the dinner hour, principals remained in the school office, surrounded by waiting pupils, fielding calls from parents, waiting for a missing bus. Frequently, the principal would express a sense of frustration and anger over the lack of assistance from those who were supposedly in charge of coordinating the busing program for the school district.

Similarly, principals took pains to be present in situations and circumstances that offered a potential for trouble. One principal personally supervised outdoor recess, to be sure none of the youngsters escaped to a nearby grocery where penny candy and snacks were sold. Another principal worried about and personally directed pedestrian and vehicular traffic at an intersection next to the school were cars tended to lose traction on wet or icy mornings. A high school principal personally supervised the daily, "home room" gathering of all senior class students in the school's auditorium. In event management of a different order, a high school principal visited each of the school's new teachers at the end of the first (fall) marking period, making sure each teacher had a sufficient range of test scores and other evaluative measures for each pupil, explaining that the students and their parents have a history of questioning grades in this school; each grade must be "supportable" by sufficient evidence of student achievement.

Behavior and Image Control

Despite the existence of security aides; assistant principals for discipline; teacher assignments to hall duty, cafeteria duty, and the like; plus even city police officers on full duty in some schools--principals, both high school and elementary, spend a good deal of their time each day in the enforcement of school rules and in the maintenance of an orderly school environment. A brief portion of Mr. Rickerts' day, principal of a large high school, is illustrative:

12:57p.m. Rickerts goes upstairs to lunch. On the stairway, on the way up to the fourth floor cafeteria, he spots one male student throwing some wadded-up paper at another. Rickerts stops both boys ("What are you doing? Where are you supposed to be?") and takes time to ask and make a note of the paper thrower's name.

12:59 Rickerts proceeds through the large student cafeteria on the way to the faculty lunchroom area. On the way he checks, tries to locate the two adults (aides) who are supposed to be on duty in the cafeteria, and failing to find either aide, expresses his concern and anger.

1:00 As Rickerts nears the faculty serving area, he notices that two girls are listening to a portable radio. Both are younger students (freshmen) and Rickerts takes a moment to explain school policy (no radios) and to point out that in the future the radio will be confiscated, to be held in the office till the end of the day.

1:01 Just inside the faculty area, one of the aides on cafeteria duty is sitting having a cup of coffee. The aide sees Rickerts, the two exchange glances, and the aide rises, drains a last mouthful of coffee, and returns to duty.

1:02 Rickerts is joined at lunch by the school's choir director. During the course of a conversation about the music program and the scheduling of performances, Rickerts expresses his displeasure with the choir director over yesterday's situation. The director left some students unattended in the choir room for a short while, and there was a bit of rowdyism.

1:15 Rickerts leaves the cafeteria and descends to the second floor, where he enters a geometry classroom. There are six students just getting underway in a special geometry tutorial to help those who have failed first semester. Rickerts wants to make sure that all of those who had been "invited" to the special tutorial in fact attend.

1:17 Back in the hall, Rickerts spots another student with a radio. This is an older student, and this time Rickerts confiscates the radio, telling the boy to pick it up in the office after school.

1:18 Rickerts returns to the school's first floor and runs into the school's police officer (Officer B). Officer B and Rickerts talk for a few minutes about a knifing incident that took place earlier in the week. B informs the principal that one of the individuals involved is back in school today; Rickerts says he wants this person located and brought to the office, he's still on suspension.

1:21 A student approaches Rickerts while he's standing in the first floor hall. The student has a scheduling conflict and tells Rickerts she's having trouble getting her program for the second semester worked out.

1:22 Rickerts walks with the pupil to the office of the assistant principal who's in charge of pupil scheduling. The assistant isn't in; Rickerts leaves him a note, asking him to attend to the girl's program.

1:24 Rickerts crosses to the office of the school's associate principal, talks with her briefly about pupil attendance concerns and the work of her office for student attendance.

1:25 Rickerts returns to his own office.

Making sure that staff members are on duty, that trouble spots (e.g., the cafeteria) are appropriately manned, that classrooms are "covered," that school rules and behavior controls are being implemented, and that a modicum of cleanliness and decorum is apparent--appear to be a vital part of the role of nearly every city principal, a supervisory role necessary to both the instructional and disciplinary well-being of the school.

One of the first activities each morning is a check to make sure that the assignments of absentee instructional personnel are "covered." Often, there aren't sufficient numbers of day-to-day substitute teachers available, so other arrangements are made (e.g., gym teachers take on classroom duties, classes are combined, specialist personnel such as the Title I coordinator fill in). A common problem for high school principals is the maintenance of school security vis-a-vis the surrounding community. Often a continuous battle is waged to keep "outsiders" out of the school and to enforce a rule that legitimate "insiders" must wear their ID tags. Both elementary and high school principals typically also do a bit of housecleaning while patrolling the halls (e.g., ask-

'ing pupils they see to pick up loose papers, occasionally gathering a bit of trash themselves and throwing it away). More than simply a concern for cleanliness, the stress upon trash disposal communicates an important message of environment control.

Keeping "Outside" Influences Under Control

Mann (1976) has suggested that school principals exhibit three distinct styles in "representing" the school system to its community constituency. These representational styles are: (1) trustee, (2) delegate, and (3) politico. Briefly, the trustee considers his professional judgment and experience to be paramount, and expects the community to both honor and follow his professional leadership. The delegate reverses the trustee style of representation in that he believes it is the school administrator's job to be open, to respond to, and to follow the wishes and interests of the local community. The politico uses both trustee and delegate styles of representation as occasions demand--employing one (e.g., the trustee orientation) in some situations and in handling some issues but using the other (e.g., the delegate style) when that approach is more appropriate to the occasion. A surprising finding, says Mann, is that there appear to be fewer politicos among principals than any other representational type (p. 29).

However, in our observation of principals in one large-city context, it would appear that site-level administrators engage frequently in community interaction behaviors that approach Mann's "politico" style. In the midst of much environmental complexity and considerable ambiguity in school system direction, policy, and procedure, building administrators appear often to depend upon a relationship with their local community that balances constituent interests against professional and organizational demands. Three strategies used by principals are: (a) the use of the community to protect areas of principalship authority and/or resource control, (b) the discretionary use of the principal's office to build community support, and (c) the orchestration of community involvement in such fashion as to engender interest in the work of the school without generating school-community conflict.

Protecting the Work of the School

It is well understood by administrators in the school district under study that principals are expected to establish friendly and useful relationships with their local neighborhoods but are similarly expected to buttress the larger organization from the demands and pressures of communit, groups.

Occasionally groups of parents will "pack" a school board meeting, flood headquarters with mail, and/or picket the board of education offices--expressing concerns about a particular school's program, staffing, or resource allocation. The principals serving in schools where these "drastic" actions develop are not highly regarded, however, by their superiors and peers. The blatant use of community support to pressure a school board response is much frowned upon. When principal Carter elicited, as a last resort, a letter writing campaign and the development of articles in the community newspaper in order to acquire some critically needed textbook funds, the funds were forthcoming but in company with some very direct criticism. "You shouldn't have done that, you embarrassed us," commented his immediate superior.

Generally, approaches to the use of the community to protect the work and the resources of the individual school are much more subtle. In the course of involving parents in fund-raising (e.g., bazaars, bake sales, candy sales), in pageants (e.g., a Christmas performance, a science fair, an art fair), and in field trips (e.g., a state capital trip; museum and zoo trips)--the school channels parent energy and involvement into supportive activities and activities that increase, sometimes considerably, the staff resources available to the principal.

Some principals will cultivate some nearby residents (often some grandmothers in the area) as "spotters" for the school--persons who know the community well and can warn the school of unusual developments (e.g., there's a rumor of drug dealing at a corner grocery; two gangs had a fight over the weekend at a nearby park; Mrs. B's husband was arrested last night and her four children are very

much "on edge"). Other principals will involve community residents more directly in roles that serve organizational stability. Principal Gorman, for example, was newly transferred to the Huff School. Gorman was the first black administrator ever assigned to Huff--a school serving an area of the city well known for its white ethnic opposition to any form of housing or school desegregation. One of Gorman's first decisions was to increase significantly the duties and the authority of a school aide (a life-long resident of the neighborhood), making her responsible for pupil discipline and disciplinary contacts with parents. A brief excerpt from our research illustrates the important role of this individual (Mrs. R).

> Gorman is at his desk, with some paper-work. Mrs. R. enters, with two boys (aged about 9) in tow and explains to Gorman that Danny and John are in serious trouble. On the way to school they took and battered (ruined) a younger boy's lunchbox. R. wants to bring the incident to Gorman's attention and to call the boys' mothers.
>
> Mrs. R. reaches for Gorman's phone and calls the first mother. After some introductory pleasantries (Mrs. R. asks about Mrs. V.'s mother in the hospital), Mrs. R. explains that her son and John S. were picking on Jimmie H. once again; they broke his lunchbox, and will have to pay for it. Mrs. R. then calls Danny's mother and repeats the message. After hanging up, she proceeds to "get tough" with the boys, using Gorman as a point of reference: "Mr. Gorman, I want you to know these two are going to have to start growing up. I know both their families, they come from good homes, but when they get together they always seem to get in trouble. I want you two to stop walking together to school, come and leave by yourselves from now on." Mrs. R. concludes by stating she'll have to find out the cost of the lunchbox and will let them know how much they owe.
>
> After sitting silently at his desk throughout all of this, merely observing, Gorman now adds his own displeasure with the boys' behavior and tells them that this kind of foolishness on the way to school must stop. He concludes by thanking Mrs. R. for bringing the matter to his attention and for her handling of the incident.

Building Community Support

Many principals give a fairly substantial amount of time to the cultivation of the surrounding community. Principal Masters schedules a series of coffees in the homes of parents over the course of each year--inviting a few parents upon each occasion to the home of another, to discuss the work of the school

and to become better acquainted. Principals Harper and Cory devote a good deal of attention to "outreach" efforts--organizing visits to nearby senior citizens' homes and clubs, arranging food baskets for needy families in the neighborhood at Christmas. Principal Johnson is active in a local businessman's organization and has secured the agreement of a neighborhood bank to sponsor prizes (e.g., savings bonds, cash awards) for academic excellence in his school.

One of the most effective means for solidifying community support, however, is the principal's discretionary response to requests for special consideration. Most often, such discretion involves the provision of access to the school and its programs through unusual channels or procedures. A father makes a personal request to Principal Roberts, for example, asking that his son be admitted to the school's special education program, even though the school district's testing procedures haven't indicated the need for special education. Roberts tells the father he'll go ahead and start the boy in special education anyway. In the meantime, the father should secure a letter from the family's own medical authority, requesting special education placement.

Similarly, discretionary authority may frequently be used to open up school enrollments, despite school district rules governing the allocation of pupils to schools in terms of attendance-area boundaries. When there is space available, when there's a previous relationship between a family and the school (e.g., a relative attends or has attended), and when there's clearly some legitimacy to the parental request (e.g., the family does live fairly close to the school but is just beyond the attendance boundary), then principals will commonly be open and flexible in admissions decisions.

Item: Mr. Larkin (Principal of Greeneland Park School) and his assistant principal are talking in Larkin's office. Larkin mentions that he has eight new kindergarten enrollments on his desk, all from outside the attendance area. Larkin asks the assistant whether there's enough space left in the two kindergarten rooms, mentioning that all eight are nearby residents who really should be in the Jackson School, but in fact live a bit closer to Greeneland Park. They decide to wait a few days before formally enrolling and placing the new pupils, to see first if any additional pupils show up from within the immediate neighborhood. At the end of the week each school must report its final enrollment

figures to the central office. Larkin tells his assistant that these people really consider themselves a part of the Greeneland Park community, despite school jurisdictions, and he'd like to accommodate parent preferences if he has the space.

Orchestrating Community Involvement

Parental participation in the life of city schools appears to be greater than ever before. The "four-walls" interpretation of school life as a bastion of professional activity that is to be kept most carefully closed to all "outside" participation and influence seems to have been replaced by a new attitude of much local involvement and a rather considered community responsiveness. Parents are now playing valued, formal roles in the instructional program, often as paid aides to teachers and staff, and very frequently as volunteers in areas closely associated with matters of classroom instruction as tutors, teacher aides, library assistants, and sponsors of special programs (e.g., Reading is Fundamental, RIF).

In roles less closely associated with instruction, parents as never before are involved in school fund raising, pageants and school assemblies, field trips, and the sponsorship of extracurricular activities. In decision-making and governance at the school site-level, parent advisory councils are now concerned with an increasing range of resource allocation and programmatic decisions that were not long ago considered the responsibility of unfettered professionalism.[3] The schools are, additionally, "reaching out" increasingly to parents through newsletters, home visits, recreation nights, and open houses.

Of importance to the principal in maintaining the stability of the school, however, is the combination of community involvement with very little, real parental power in school policymaking. As we have observed earlier (see Crowson and Porter-Gehrie 1980, pp. 21-22), it may be suggested that the school principal is expected by the larger organization to be responsive to, but also to buttress the school system from, community interests and demands. The principal must balance parental involvement against his or her need for authoritative control over the school.

Item: Princpal Harper complains about his difficulty in getting parents involved in his school: "Hardly anyone ever comes to the parents' council meetings, and for two years now they haven't even been able to elect a council president." However, Harper becomes very upset later when some parents threaten to bring their dissatisfaction with one of the school's teachers to the attention of upper-level school system administrators. "I don't want them washing our linen in public like that."

Item: Wilson High School has recently suffered an auditorium fire, causing much damage but no injuries. The fire appears to have been set by some arsonists over the course of the past weekend. The school's parent council is much concerned, has distributed a flyer in the community asking for help in identifying the culprit(s), and is now meeting at the school to discuss the matter. There is concern about whether the auditorium can be repaired in time for graduation, and there is a motion to be considered--a parents' council reward for the capture of the fire bug.

The turnout for this morning's meeting is fairly large. The president, Mrs. Conroy, opens the meeting by reporting to the parents she has been assured that the auditorium can be repaired in time for graduation and she's very glad to hear this because for awhile there was fear they would have to raise funds to rent a hall. Mrs. Conroy goes on to suggest that the school and the parent council each contribute a hundred dollars in reward money for information leading to the arrest of the arsonist.

At this point a number of people begin to speak up. The discussion now begins to be directed not at Mrs. Conroy but at Mr. Tilman, the school's principal. One person asks how they can be so sure someone from the community set the fire and that the community has knowledge of it. The school has been undergoing some rehabilitation lately; it might not be someone from the community, perhaps somebody involved on the contractor's end is to blame.

A second, a third, and a fourth person speak. The flyer that went out said that we must "seek out the person among us who set the fire." This assumes that the guilty party is from the community. It's inappropriate for the flyer to blame the community for the fire. Others add: "Do you have copies of the reports from the police and fire departments? What do they say? We need the facts not assumptions." Why would a community person just set the fire and not steal anything? It must be someone with a different motive--maybe a worker involved in the rehab who has a complaint against his employer, or somebody else who's angry at the Board of Education.

At this point Mrs. Conroy asks for a vote on the reward money, but this simply aggravates the issue, no vote is taken, and tempers begin to flare. The most outspoken critics are not parent council regulars, and one of the regulars asks some of the newcomers if they're from the community. Addresses are given to show they are, but there's a hostile atmosphere now.

At a question as to why the night watchman didn't guard the auditorium properly, and why the alarm system didn't work, Principal Tilman takes an opportunity to redirect the discussion to the school's security problems in general. There's constant theft from lockers, there's insufficient security staff to cover the many halls and exits, there have been recent cuts in security aide resources. The discussion does shift, and many questions are now asked, plus comments made, about the school's security.

Soon, one person suggests that the community can get help only if they go to the Board of Education offices as a group and demonstrate in favor of more security for the school. Tilman quickly intervenes and suggests that at the next meeting they ask Mr. Forman (who is in charge of security for the school system) to come and talk with the council, answer their questions. Mrs. Conroy jumps in to say that the parents, for one thing, must start helping with security. Another regular council member adds: "The parents can come to this school to volunteer, that's a great idea; we've got to take a first step here, pledge ourselves to assisting security, not just discuss this as something somebody should be doing." An additional council regular continues pointedly: "We sit and talk but who shows up to do the work? There's a big difference in saying at a meeting that you want to be involved in something and actually showing up for work to be done. You've got to get up, put your clothes on, and get yourself going." There's no response from the previously vocal newcomers, and principal Tilman offers, as the meeting closes to walk over to the auditorium with any who wish to take a look at the damage that was done,

Keeping Staff Conflicts at Bay

There has been a good deal of interest in the give-and-take relationship between the school principal and his teaching staff. Willard Waller (1932) was among the first to outline a pattern of reciprocity between administrative and instructional personnel--a reciprocity based upon an essential conflict of interest between professional and bureaucratic norms in the midst of an organizational need for cooperative behavior. Both Becker (1961) and Lortie (1969) similarly investigated the interactions of teachers and principals and the balance of power that exists between them. The principal, as Becker notes, is expected by his faculty to "back them up" and to respect their "professional independence." A failure to meet faculty expectations is likely to result in a variety of sanctions--including threats of or requests for transfer, the use of connections in the community "to create sentiment against the principal," and the use of contacts elsewhere in the organization to circumvent the principal (Becker 1961, pp. 246-248).

Barsky (1975) found further that beyond "backing the teacher up," a principal also adds to his authority by (a) showing interest in and offering help with the personal problems of his faculty, (b) offering assistance with individual professional matters, (c) handling personally much of the detail and "paper work" of the school, and (d) assuming responsibility for discipline and control.

In his more recent work, Schoolteacher (1975), Lortie suggests that in his within-school interactions, the principal derives much greater power than his limited, formal authority and his place within the organizational hierarchy would indicate:

> ...the interaction within a particular school is greater than interaction across its boundaries, and the principal is the key official within that dense network. 'Large decisions' may be made in the central office, but the principal makes many 'small decisions' which affect the life of the school and those who work in it (Lortie, p. 195).

It is our finding, as well, that much of the time of the building principal and many of the small decisions that occur throughout the working day revolve around a role of help to, and cooperatively the gaining of assistance from, the school's instructional, as well as its noninstructional, staff. The maintenance of the staff relationship is a vital part of the principalship role.

The principal, in the large-city context, must typically operate his or her school in the midst of very serious constraints of legal and organizational authority. The teachers' union contract specifies clear limits upon class size, on-duty and off-duty hours, and the amount of extra work that can be expected of staff (e.g., curriculum committees, lunchroom supervision). Procedures for the evaluation and eventual dismissal of teachers are most elaborate, enormously time-consuming, and filled with organizational pitfalls.[4] Additionally, a number of categories of school staff in many systems are not directly responsible to the building principal (e.g., maintenance and cafeteria personnel, plus a number of specialized teachers who roam from school to school).

In the midst of staffing constraints the principal must nevertheless be responsive to and have sufficient flexibility available to care for, the demand and occurrences that surface. Despite classes that are "up to the limit" in pupil enrollment, new arrivals must be accommodated. Despite the agreement on unassigned teacher time (e.g., "preparation periods"), the personnel available to the school must be used fully to insure that order prevails and the children are always supervised. Despite the assistance of clerks, assistant principals, aides, and others, the administrative work of the school demands that classroom teachers also cooperate freely in taking on committee assignments, club or activity sponsorship, pupil supervision duties (e.g., at sporting events, dances, festivals, before and after school), curriculum development, and the never-ending filing of reports and classroom statistics. An item, below, illustrates the nature of the relationship that develops around these staffing constraints.

Item: Mrs. Farnsworth, the school clerk, asks Principal Porter for help in deciding where to allocate some newly arriving pupils. A mother is here with three children--transfers to the school from another state. Other than medical and dental forms, the family brought no records from their former school to help in classroom placement. Porter talks with the family a bit; it appears that the assignment of the two boys (a kindergarten pupil and an eighth grader) is no problem; the difficulty is with the girl. The mother mentions that the daughter was held back in the fifth grade at their former school, and is now in special education. There is no additional information, however, on what manner of special education this was and/or what progress in achievement the girl had been making.

Porter examines a list of teachers and classroom enrollments a bit, then tells the clerk to send the girl to Mrs. Barker: "She'll watch her closely; and Mrs. Barker can decide if papers for special ed. have to be started."

Porter then leaves the office immediately and climbs to the second floor, to see Mrs. Barker. He tells her of the new arrival and complains about the lack of school records, the absence of any help in placing the child. "The girl is obviously special ed., but they give you nothing at all to go on." Porter then asks Barker: "How are you?" Barker, understanding, answers: "I'm full; those two boys who came in last week are more than enough to handle." Porter, jokingly, interjects: "Oh, but now you need a sweet little girl to balance it off." In ser-

iousness now, Porter mentions that he needs to place the girl in a regular classroom with someone who'll watch her closely for awhile and see how she does, before they can move toward a special ed. placement. Barker, with a smile, remarks: "So it's up to me to get her tested, screened, do all that paperwork, huh?" Porter replies that the office will do a lot to help, but that he didn't want to give the girl to Mrs. E. He wanted to be sure, he tells Barker, that the girl is watched closely and conscientiously by a really good teacher. Porter prepares to leave, saying: "You're very kind to take her in. I really appreciate it. We'll see how she does."

In the course of sustaining a balanced relationship with the school staff, principals appear to concentrate much attention upon: (a) the satisfaction of staff welfare and professional resource needs, (b) the fulfillment of teacher expectations regarding professional autonomy, and (c) the development and maintenance of a reward system for cooperative behavior.

Satisfying Staff Welfare and Resource Needs

Although their styles and their degrees of "openness" vary, both elementary and secondary principals spend a good deal of time attending to the individual and professional concerns of their school staff members. Nearly every principal positions himself at the "front desk" each day as teachers are signing in or signing out. Pleasantries are exchanged, messages are communicated, questions about schedules or procedures are asked and answered, concerns about friends or loved ones are expressed, some bantering and joking occurs, a few rumors are passed on. Nearly every tour of the halls by the principal results in at least a couple of exchanges with staff members, wherein the principal receives a request for assistance in some form or is reporting back after having responded to a request. The nature of the helping relationship is illustrated by the activity of Principal Mathews in trying to assist Miss Colby with a payroll problem.

Item: While Mathews walks the halls shortly before the beginning of classes, one of his teachers (Miss Colby) hands him a note. Mathews glances at it and passes on. Later, he mentions that Miss Colby is telling him that Friday's salary check still didn't include her missing pay. Mathews says this is a problem that really has him bugged right now. Miss Colby, was on sick leave in September for eleven days. Even though absent she has the sick leave coming, and is entitled to her pay for those eleven days. She hasn't been paid, and now, in mid-December, Mathews is still trying to clear it all up.

> A call to the personnel clerk in the school system's area office, some time ago, gave Mathews the information that a certain work sheet had to be submitted. The form was mailed but still no pay. Now (11:14 a.m.) Mathews is calling again. He reviews the case with the personnel clerk ("a work sheet was sent in and that's as far as we've gotten") and waits on the phone for some time while the clerk reviews her records and tries to track the case down.
>
> Finally, the clerk concludes there is nothing more the area office can do, and Mathews will have to contact the central personnel office downtown. While a teacher is on extended sick leave, neither the school nor the area office officially records the teacher's time. The payroll is handled by someone in the central office, but the clerk doesn't know the name of the appropriate person. Mathews, a bit angry: "So, someone downtown does it, but no one knows who. Who's reporting her time? Someone has to be reporting her time." The area clerk says she really can't help, and Mathews places a call to the central personnel office. The line is busy. Mathews decides to go to lunch and try again later.

In addition to their help with "welfare" problems (e.g., payroll, sick leave, etc.), principals also give much of themselves to assisting their staff professionally. A book order is all mixed up and the principal quickly arranges a loan of texts from a nearby school to insure each teacher enough books for all of her pupils. An elementary school receives an unexpected increase in its number of teaching staff, and the principal decides to use the new positions in such a way as to give some of his most heavily burdened teachers a non-teaching ("preparation") period. The school suddenly runs out of ditto-masters, and the principal makes a run on his own to an office store, to purchase an emergency supply. A youngster in Miss Jones' class is oversize for his age, and Principal Smith spends a good part of one morning locating an appropriate desk and chair for the boy.

Interestingly, the staff assistance provided by the principal, both welfare and professional, can be just as effectively used as punishment rather than reward. With those staff members who don't reciprocate, who don't cooperate fully in meeting the principal's goals, administrative help with personal problems can be nicely withdrawn. An example follows from the same principal, Mathews, who sought to help a teacher obtain some back pay following an extended sick leave. In this second case the person making the request is considered by the principal to be a rather poor worker and not very cooperative.

Item: Mrs. Walker enters Mr. Mathews' office to ask about a special program that's scheduled for the day. The atmosphere seems strained between the two, and just after Walker leaves Mathews says: "She's mad at me." He goes on to explain that Mrs. Walker was absent on the day before a recent holiday. She neglected to call her absence in, and therefore received no pay for that day. And, since it occurred just before a break, she also received no salary for the two days of holiday. Mathews says: "She's angry at me, but I'm not going to cover for her. Suppose she got into an auto accident in Kentucky or something, and I'm back here saying 'Oh yeah, she was in.'"

Fulfilling Expectations of Teacher Autonomy

A fundamental norm of teacher-principal interaction is that of respect for the professional autonomy of the classroom teacher. One of the principal's key roles is the protection he affords the teacher from "outside" interference and the actions he takes to "back the teacher up" in problematic situations.

Much professional autonomy is, of course, structured into the procedures and contractural obligations that surround the administrative setting. The union contract places clear and rather strict limits upon the principal in teacher evaluation, dismissal, and allocation of work assignments. Other school system regulations and guidelines are similarly careful to recognize boundaries that traditionally restrict the demands that can be made upon the teacher. Beyond these legal or contractural and procedural guarantees, however, the classroom teacher is rather often in need of the additional "protection" that the school principal can provide.

Item: Andrews, principal of one of the city's largest college prep high schools, made a point of dropping in briefly on all ten of the school's new teachers, just a couple of days before the end of the first (fall) grading period. Andrews asked each teacher how many separate examination, term paper, project, report, etc. grades the teacher had for each pupil--pointing out that he hoped each instructor had at least eight to ten marks upon which to develop an average. Andrews cautioned each teacher that the pupils and their parents in this school aren't reluctant to question a grade, and the teacher "had, better make sure he's covered."

Item: It is just after 10:30 a.m. Dr. Robinson and the observer are in her office where a meeting with the school social worker has just concluded. A mother comes into the office with her child. His name is Jordan Russel. Mrs. Russel tells us that Jordan came home last night with dried blood in his nose. When she asked him about it he told her that his teacher, Mrs. Briggs, hit him on the nose with a ruler.

Dr. Robinson asks Jordan to come to her. She sits in the chair beside her desk and he stands directly in front of her. They are face to face. Her tone is soft and gentle as she asks him to tell her what happened.

Jordan answers, "That boy was talking to me."*
What boy? asks Dr. Robinson.
Tony, he says.
What was he talking about? she wants to know.
Casper.
A cartoon?
Yes.
What were you supposed to be doing?
Doing work, he says.
And the teacher, she did what? she asks.
The teacher hit me across the nose with a ruler.
Did it hurt? she asks.
Uh huh.
Did it bleed a lot?
A lot of blood came up.
What did the teacher do?
Put a towel on it.
Was your nose swollen?
No.
She hit hard enough to make your nose bleed, and there as not redness or swelling? Robinson inquires.

At this point the child's mother interrupts and says to Dr. Robinson that, "It was red last night." Dr. Robinson turns back to Jordan and asks him, "Did you cry?"

Yes, he responds.
How much, a lot?
No!
Did you cry when she hit you?
No. (He reverses his position.)
All that blood, and none of your clothes? she asks.
Jordan says nothing, but starts to say uh, uh, uh.
Did the other children see it? Dr. Robinson asks.
Yes.
What will they tell me, will they tell me the same thing? she asks.
No, he shakes his head.
You know what I'm going to ask them, don't you?
Don't you think they will tell the truth?
Yes, he says.
Well, then, what will they say?
"The teacher hit me across the nose," he says.
What were you doing when she hit you?
Nothing.
You mean that you <u>weren't</u> talking and she hit <u>you</u>, and Tony <u>was</u> talking and she <u>didn't</u> hit Tony?
I don't know, he says.
Did the teacher hit you before? she asks.
He says, yes, right here, and points to his leg.

*Words in quotes are direct, otherwise dialogue is paraphrased.

His mother interjects here that the last time he complained that the teacher had hit him she found a mark on his leg that stayed for a week. Mrs. Russel explains that she didn't come to school the first time because Jordan was hit on the leg, and then she adds, "But I don't think she had any business to hit his face." Dr. Robinson turns to Jordan and asks, "Did she ever hit you on the face before?"

No, he replies.

Dr. Robinson stands and says, "Let's go see the teacher."

She explains to Mrs. Russel that Jordan's class is taking achievement tests now, so they will have to wait about ten minutes before they can talk with the teacher. Dr. Robinson asks the mother, "Can you wait that long?" She says that she can.

Jordan and Mrs. Russel leave the office to wait in the hall. Dr. Robinson turns to the observer and says, "I have told her before, 'put that ruler down.'" She adds that she has warned Mrs. Briggs that if she teaches with a ruler in her hand, it is only a matter of time before she strikes a child with it. She goes on to say that she thinks the situation is more difficult because it involves a white teacher and a black student. She also tells the observer that unless she feels that there has been a "major transgression," it is her responsibility to defend her teacher.

Rewarding Cooperative Behavior

Bridges (1970) has described the extent to which the building administrator is in many ways much more of a "pawn" of organizational relationships than he is the origin of meaningful activity. Constrained by professional norms, the union contract, board rules, funding formulae, and state or federal legalities--the school principal frequently expresses a feeling of powerlessness. In a response to a survey by a local newspaper, one principal in the community under study said that the principal is really no more than a "...toothless tiger. Every conceivable responsibility is placed on his shoulders, but he is not given sufficient authority to do the job." Similarly, in his in-depth study of a single principal Wolcott (1973) observed:

> For the most part, the exercise of the authority of his office was parcelled out to him policy by policy and directive by directive. His freedom was to make no serious mistakes (p.306).

Despite some severe restraints upon his capacities for rewarding and punishing, we find however that the principal does have some "hard currency" available for distribution to those who are most cooperative. In the midst of resource allocation by formula and job placement by central office directive, there are many decisions by principals, in the distribution of dollars and employment, that add significantly to their maintenance of authority. Principals Banks, Crowder, and Donnelly illustrate, below, three key mechanisms that can be used.

Item: Principal Banks receives a call from the area office, informing him that six teaching positions for the summer will be available for the faculty from his school. Banks, now off the phone, explains that a rather large number of his teachers have requested summer contracts and this is one area where he has an opportunity to "acquire a hold" over his faculty. Banks says it is totally his decision as to who receives a summer appointment, the teachers know this and it makes a difference--especially, of course, to those who have applied and need the money. In a few minutes, Mr. Banks leaves his office and begins a tour of classrooms to check with a number of teachers whom he is identifying for summer school--some of whom hadn't even applied. Upon return to the office, Banks says, "They were all excited."

Item: Mr. Crowder, principal of the Warner School, mentions that he's finally received the approval needed to "firm up" the school's assistant principal position. Mrs. Stallings, the acting assistant, can now become a full-time assistant principal, freed from all classroom duties. What he has to do now though, says Crowder, is go through all of the motions of opening the job up to everyone and interviewing all of the eligible candidates. Thus, all last week he spent time interviewing people in his office. Some twenty-three persons applied and he gave them about fifteen to twenty minutes apiece--asking all applicants the same set of six questions. He remarks: "It was rather funny, of course, because I had to give Mrs. Stallings an interview too and we [he and Stallings] had sat down together earlier to put together the six questions." Crowder goes on to mention that he would have had to interview more people, but some who called bowed out when they found out there was an inside candidate. Now, says Crowder, he has to write up his evaluations and send his request for appointment of Stallings in to personnel. As soon as this goes through, he wants to move Mr. Wilson out of the classroom part-time to the adjustment teacher position that'll become available. Wilson is a very sharp and hard-working young man who should be guided into administration.

Item: Principal Donnelly is roaming from one committee meeting to another, as his teachers meet after school in groups to develop and improve curricula. Donnelly explains that the faculty meet once each week after school for forty-five minutes. Participation is totally "voluntary;" however, says Donnelly, he does consider attendance and involvement in committee work very highly in considering staff ratings for the year. On the way between classrooms, from one

committee session to another, Donnelly remarks that the teacher chairing the group we just saw is doing a topnotch job--really enthusiastic. Donnelly says he gave her a "satisfactory" rating last year, and she came weeping into the office asking what she could do to raise her rating. Only the two highest ratings (superior and excellent) qualify a teacher for many opportunities for career advancement within the school system.

Keeping the School Supplied with Adequate Resources

Lortie (1969) has pointed out that school managers probably have fewer powers of resource allocation than officials in many other types of organizations. Most key resources are handled by formulas that are tied to pupil enrollments or staffing ratios. Salaries and pay adjustments are established automatically and only at certain intervals. In fact, the rhythm of resource allocation decisions generally in education is infrequent--with most major allocations established only once or twice a year.

School principals in a large-city system have very limited formal control over the resources available for the operation of their respective schools. Budgets are established and teaching positions allocated, and adjustments are later made as enrollments change or as cutbacks are necessary, with no involvement on the part of each site-level administrator. The principal is given a budget for the year and is expected to live within it.

Informally, however, we find that principals have the capacity to affect, sometimes significantly, the flow of resources to their buildings. Often this capacity is of a rather negative orientation, as exemplified by Principal Moore's remark that he hasn't received his supplies and materials budget for the year yet, but when the money does come, he's going to spend everything he can right away, "before they decide on a twenty percent cut like last year."

Many of the actions of the principal to retain or obtain needed resources are much more active and "positive" in nature, however. Two strategies observed are: (a) knowing and using "the system" to best advantage, and (b) finding discretionary resources on the outside.

Knowing and Using the System

James March and his colleagues (1976) have suggested that organizational choices are fundamentally ambiguous. A complex flow of events, an inadequate understanding of environmental forces, and a lack of clarity as to organizational intent, for example, are just a few of the ambiguities that typically surround management. An organization, it is noted, is "a set of procedures for argumentation and interpretation as well as for solving problems and making decisions" (p. 25).

School principals find very early in their careers that argumentation and interpretation are very necessary to their organizational role. Principal Smith, for example, was ecstatic at receiving, at his request, a letter from Personnel agreeing to the designation "branch" for a separate building under his control. With the building considered a branch rather than a separate school, the school system's funding formula provides additional secretarial, library, and physical education staffing. On another issue, Principal Herrold has been concerned for some time about the physical condition of his school building, its crying need for major rehabilitation. The school is scheduled for rehab, but is rather far from the top of a priority list. Herrold mentions one day that he thinks he's finally beginning to get somewhere. He's begun arguing that unless some brick work takes place immediately on a very tall chimney that's standing beside and serving the school, the chimney or portions of it will be likely to fall. Herrold says he thinks if he can just get them to start the rehab, he can then parlay this emergency repair into a completion of the entire job. Finally, in a last example, Principal Marks takes a walk through the old locker room of the school gym and shows off all of the shiny, new kitchen equipment that's just been delivered. Marks mentions that he's just completing his second year as principal of the school, and has been working from his first week on the job to get the hot lunch facility. Now, the next problem is getting the installers out here to set it all up.

Beyond strategies of argumentation and interpretation, building principals sometimes find it necessary to barter and bargain for resources and sometimes as well will be seen to "stretch" the limits of school system reporting requirements. The examples, below, illustrate both situations.

Item: Principal Larson discloses that he has a 1:30 meeting scheduled with his area superintendent. It's not a meeting he's looking forward to, because it's to be a discussion of the coming school year's budget--and projections of enrollment for the school indicate that Larson will have to lose some of his staff. One particular problem is his ratio of secretarial staff to the number of teachers in the school. The number of classroom teachers will be falling below the prescribed minimum for the support of two full-time school secretaries. One of the two, the one with least tenure, will have to go; but both have worked in his school for more than fifteen years--and are really fixtures here. Larson says he's got to talk the area superintendent into letting him keep both secretaries. Later, Larson reports upon his meeting with the superintendent. It was a difficult discussion but Larson persuaded the area superintendent to let him keep the second check. However, he did have to agree to drop both a half-time physical education and a half-time librarian position.

Item: Principal Hodges and the school's assistant principal discuss the school's fall enrollment and the relative size of each class --as the deadline approaches for the final reporting of school enrollment figures to the central office. Hodges acknowledges that the school is down in enrollment, and may conceivably lose staff as a consequence. However, Hodges concludes: "I'm going to bluff it out, we're only twenty [pupils] down. I'm going to say we've got new kids coming every day and there should be no need to withdraw any [teaching] positions. I'm going to try to hold them off as long as possible, because I don't think we'll be down at all, before long."

Finding Outside Resources

George Jensen, principal of the Greenbriar School, makes the point, one day, that he used to spend hours and hours each month raising money. Not only he, but the whole school, including the children, devoted an enormous amount of time each year to bazaars, bake sales, candy and sweat shirt sales, noon movies, raffles, etc. "But," says Jensen, "I began to ask about the morality of it--is my job that of fund raiser, and is it right to suspend educational activities to raise money?" "The problem," continues Jensen, is that "they [headquarters] almost expect it; they don't tell you that but it's almost necessary. Every year

they cut the supplies and materials budget." "One thing that's still good," continues Jensen; "is the school pictures arrangement. That brings in about $2,000 a year. A movie, too, will raise about $300."

Nearly every principal finds it necessary to develop independent sources of added funds. Some, like Jensen, are more bothered by this than others. Some are much more successful and energetic about it than others. The feeling is widespread, however, that the school system expects and forces entrepreneurial activity as a matter of organizational procedure. Budgets for supplies, materials, and equipment are either held constant annually or cut--in the face of inflating prices. Principals become accustomed to "taking up the slack" on their own, through fundraising ventures. Most often the fundraising will involve activities that raise money from the student body (e.g., noon movies, T-shirt sales), raise money from parents (e.g., bake sales, Christmas bazaars), and raise money from the surrounding community (e.g., candy sales, raffles). Often principals will also put in time soliciting contributions from local institutions (e.g., $25 awards from a local bank to go to students winning essay or math contests). Much effort is additionally spent exploring sources of any free assistance that may be available fro groups or organizations located anywhere in the city. And, in many of the larger schools, principals will give time to the management of what in some cases are rather large portfolios of investments made over the years for the school.

'n addition to the fundraising that's an expected part of the principalship, it's well understood within the school system that building administrators must, on their own, very often take charge of necessary corrections in the distribution of resources. When insufficient numbers of materials are sent from "downtown," the principal is more likely to barter a correction in his resource allocation with fellow administrators than to seek help from the central office. Extra fourth grade mathematics textbooks are exchanged between two principals for some texts needed in seventh grade science; an extra supply of ditto paper is "loaned" to a school that's running short; colored paper for art and bulletin

board displays is frequently passed about, as are many other supplies for the school office (e.g., typing paper, envelopes) and materials for teachers (e.g., curriculum guides, instructional manuals).

Item: Principal Mercer is informed by one of the school clerks that in a count of the new report cards just delivered she finds that they will be short about 75 cards. The cards, with first marking period grades, are scheduled to be sent home with all of the pupils the day after tomorrow. Mercer calls a friend, a fellow principal in a nearby school, to ask if they have any report cards to spare. This principal, Simpson, informs Mercer that he, too, is short--and in calling around has discovered that the central office has miscalculated, on the short side, the numbers of cards needed in schools all over this end of town. Mercer, off the phone now, remarks that it does little good to call the Supply Office downtown. They never admit to a mistake, will claim the fault is somehow the school's, and would take at least a week to get an additional 75 cards out to the school. Now, Mercer begins calling in earnest to acquaintances, fellow principals, all over the city. He gets a promise of twenty cards from one school, fifteen from another, etc. until the shortfall is corrected. They all promise to get the cards in the mail immediately so they'll arrive in time for report card day on Friday.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

We have attempted to describe some elements of the role of the building principal in a large-city school system. Specifically, we have asked how principals define their role and use some of the discretionary authority at their command to provide a stabilizing and steadying influence for the organization. Some key activities of principals, in this regard, are efforts to: (a) maintain disciplinary stability, (b) keep "outside" influences under control, (c) keep staff conflicts at bay, and (d) keep the school supplied with adequate resources.

There is a rather sizeable literature on the role of the school principal. The leadership behavior of principals has been the focus of much interest (Halpin and Croft, 1963; Gross and Herriott, 1965; Hemphill, 1964). The important responsibility of the principal in directing curriculum development and supervising teachers has been thoroughly highlighted (Kammer, 1977; Nottingham, 1977; Wood, et al., 1979). The role of the principal in guiding a close and productive relationship between school and community is of increasing concern (Cibulka, 1979; Fantini, 1975; Mann, 1976). And, rather recently, the managerial and decision-

making behavior of the principal has been a central focus of job description efforts (Lipham and Hoeh, 1974; Peterson, 1978).

Throughout the literature, however, there is little attention to the principalship in its organizational context. One of the few studies to relate the principalship to situational factors is the national study of "what is it that principals do" by McPherson, Salley, and Baehr (1975). The authors found that principals adapt to differing conditions of operation (e.g., varying collegial and community factors); additionally, principals are influenced and constrained by differences in organizational structure (e.g., school size, number of grade levels in the school) in which they work.

There are some additional hints, in the work of others, that organizational variables are important to an understanding of principalship behavior. Rogers (1968), in a highly critical investigation into organizational constraints upon administrative behavior in the New York City Schools, suggests that overcentralized decision-making and an over-reliance upon rules and outdated operating procedures resulted in a serious loss of flexibility and managerial capability among local school officials (pp. 271-285). Gross and H erriott (1965) note that a principal's ability to provide leadership in his school seems constrained by such organizationally-related factors as (a) the strength of the principal's immediate superior, (b) procedures used by the school system to select and allocate school staffs, (c) the school system's reward structure, and (d) school size. Barsky (1975) found (in his case study of a single, large-city principal) that the principal's "knowledge of how the system functions," his grasp of the "informal organization" (e.g., knowing central office secretaries and administrative assistants on a first-name basis), and his understanding of the organizational reward system (e.g., conforming to the central office stress upon accurate records)--were central to the principal's administrative role. Finally, Wolcott (1973) notes that the principal plays an important "interface" role for his school organization--using the power of his position to soften "organizational insensitivity" in place of a "human sensitivity of his own" (p. 320).

In some additional writing about the principalship, Wolcott (1977) has also described the principal's "proclivity toward variety-reducing behavior" (p. 536). He observed that principals try to keep things manageable--expressing preferences and undertaking decisions that reduce and constrain, that allow little room for the introduction of the new, the unexpected, the variant. Wolcott notes further that the principalship is forced into a rather curious paradox in that building administrators are ideally touted as agents for change and school improvement but operate in actuality as forces for conservatism and stability, seeking to manage, control, and limit change.

It would be misleading and in error for us to suggest, from our research, that the principalship is fundamentally a force against change, an element of organizational reaction against educational innovation.[5] To the contrary, the large-city principals whom we observed were, for the most part, a group of people who did their very best, amidst many constraints, to provide the assistance and direction necessary to school improvement.

It is not an inconsistency for the school principalship to contain <u>both</u> organizational maintenance <u>and</u> leadership roles. Within the loose framework of authority and responsibility that defines the public school system it may be the discretionary decision-making of the school principal (the lowest-level administrative participant in the organization) that more than any other force provides the order, keeps the staff equanimity, provides the balance between school and community, and protects the resource flow--that, in combination, becomes essential to the successful achievement of organizational goals.

As Griffiths (1979) has recently pointed out, organization theory has paid insufficient attention to the contributions, the interests, and the perspectives of lower-level administrative participants (p. 46). It may be suggested, from our research, that the building principal functions as education's most important "street-level bureaucrat"--at the central yet most uncertain, point of contact

between the school organization and its varied clientele. It is the principal who receives and must come to terms on the day-to-day level with a large measure of the many demands, conflicts, unusual occurrences, and problems faced by the school system. The principal acts throughout his or her day in an organizational capacity that must seek to balance the very separate interests of organization and clientele (of teachers and parents, of teachers and "the system," of pupil needs and available organizational resources, of staff members and students). This balancing and stabilizing activity, a vital role in a key boundary-spanning position for the larger organization, is as yet little studied and poorly understood. We need much additional study of "what it is that principals do," in the course of developing a much improved sense of how education functions within its organizational environment.

Notes

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1. The sample of principals was selected from a "grid" of schools stratified according to enrollment size, student turnover, and school type (elementary vs. secondary). From each cell in the grid some five or six principals were identified, with the help of a professional advisory committee, to provide a pool of subjects which represented geographic, age, sex, experiential, and racial diversity. From this pool, the research team randomly selected subjects for observation, asking each principal for his or her voluntary participation in the study. Just one person decided not to participate.

2. For an earlier report of the decision-making of principals in accommodating problems of inadequate resoruces, ambiguous role expectations, and challenges to their authority, see: R. Crowson and C. Porter-Gehrie, "The Discretionary Behavior of Principals in Large-City Schools," Educational Administration Quarterly, vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 1980), forthcoming.

3. Much of the increase in parent advisement is a consequence of federal rules and regulations surrounding such programs as compensatory education and special education. Without federal or state pressure, however, parent advisement has been extended in many directions. In the school district under study, for example, a directive in late 1979 ordered all city principals to develop a detailed list of all pupil fees and charges for the year. This list of pupil fees was to be shared with, and approved by, each school's parent advisory council and was henceforth to be sent home at the beginning of each school year. No school fees (e.g., departmental fees, athletic fees, locker fees) may be charged beyond those receiving parent council approval.

4. For example, principals who seek to dismiss "too many" incompetent teachers (more than one or two a year) are not very highly regarded by peers and hierarchical superiors.

5. This point is also made by Blumberg and Greenfield. In a study of eight principals, who displayed widely varying styles of school administration, it was found that despite pressure from the school system hierarchy up above to "keep the lid on," the principals all worked creatively for instructional improvement and organizational change. (See, Blumberg, A. and Greenfield, W. The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980).

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